

**In the Claims**

1. (currently amended) A method of establishing a virtual channel connection on one of a plurality of asynchronous transport mode adaptation layer 2 (AAL2) virtual circuit connections (VCCs) linking between first and second nodes in a communications network, the method comprising;
- at the first node, sending a connection request to the second node, said request incorporating a path identifier for an AAL2 VCC hosting a virtual channel to be used for the connection;
  - at the second node, determining whether the path identifier is acceptable to the second node for establishing the connection; and
  - at the second node, where said path identifier is not acceptable to the second node, returning to the first node a negotiation request message incorporating a new path identifier for an alternative one of said AAL2 VCCs hosting a virtual channel to be used for the connection.
2. (original) A method as claimed in claim 1, and further comprising;
- at the first node determining whether the new path identifier is acceptable to the first node for establishing the connection; and, where the new path identifier is acceptable to the first node, returning to the second node a negotiation confirm message incorporating the new path identifier to be used for the connection.
3. (original) A method as claimed in claim 2, wherein, where said new path identifier is not acceptable to the first node, a release complete message is returned to the second node to release resources reserved for the call and to cause the call attempt to be aborted.
4. (currently amended) A method as claimed in claim 3, wherein at least one said nodes comprises a service endpoint.

5. (currently amended) A method as claimed in claim 3, wherein at least one said nodes incorporates a resource pool, said resource pool being shared between a plurality of port and switch modules.

6. (original) A method as claimed in claim 4, wherein signalling between said first and second nodes is effected over a designated signalling channel.

7. (currently amended) A method as claimed in claim 5, wherein a new connection directed to a said port and switch module without spare capacity is re-directed to another said port and switch module currently having spare capacity.

8. (currently amended) A method as claimed in claim 6, wherein ~~said virtual channel connection is an ATM Adaptation Layer Two (AAL2) connection~~ at least one of said connection request and negotiation request message comprises a channel identifier (CID) in addition to a path identifier for a respective AAL2 VCC, said CID identifying an AAL2 channel within the AAL2 VCC identified by the path identifier.

9. (currently amended) A method of establishing a virtual channel connection on one of a plurality of asynchronous transport mode adaptation layer 2 (AAL2) virtual circuit connections (VCCs) linking between first and second nodes in a communications network, the method comprising ~~negotiating between~~ said first and second nodes exchanging messages whereby to determine a mutually acceptable path identifier for one of said AAL2 VCCs to host a virtual channel to be used for the connection.

10. (currently amended) An arrangement for establishing a virtual channel connection on one of a plurality of asynchronous transport mode adaptation layer 2 (AAL2) virtual circuit connections (VCCs) linking between first and second nodes in a communications network, the arrangement comprising first and second signalling

server means disposed respectively at said first and second nodes, said signalling server means being arranged to exchange messages ~~perform a negotiation~~ responsive to a connection request ~~whereby~~ to determine a mutually acceptable path identifier for one of said AAL2 VCCs ~~a to host~~ a virtual channel to be used for the connection.

11. (currently amended) An arrangement for establishing a virtual channel connection on one of a plurality of asynchronous transport mode adaptation layer 2 (AAL2) virtual circuit connections (VCCs) linking between first and second nodes in a communications network, the arrangement comprising;

first signalling server means at the first node for sending a connection request over a signalling channel to the second node, said request incorporating a path identifier for an AAL2 VCC hosting a virtual channel to be used for the connection;

second signalling server means at the second node for determining whether the path identifier is acceptable to the second node for establishing the connection; and, where said path identifier is not acceptable to the second node, for returning to the first node a negotiation request message incorporating a new path identifier for an alternative one of said AAL2 VCCs hosting a virtual channel to be used for the connection.

12. (original) An arrangement as claimed in claim 11, wherein said first signalling server means at the first node includes means for determining whether the new path identifier is acceptable to the first node for establishing the connection; and, where said new path identifier is acceptable to the first node, for returning to the second node a negotiation confirm message incorporating the said new path identifier to be used for the connection.

13. (original) An arrangement as claimed in claim 12, wherein said first signalling server means at the first node includes means for returning to the second node a

release complete message to release any resources reserved for the call and to cause the call attempt to be aborted where said new path identifier is not acceptable to the first node.

14. to 19. (cancelled)

20. (New) Computer program code stored on a machine readable medium, said code being executable to control a virtual channel connection arrangement to establish a virtual channel connection on one of a plurality of ATM AAL2 VCCs linking first and second nodes in a communications network, said code being executable to perform the steps of:

at the first node, sending a connection request to the second node, said request incorporating a path identifier for an AAL2 VCC hosting a virtual channel to be used for the connection;

at the second node, determining whether the path identifier is acceptable to the second node for establishing the connection; and

at the second node, where said path identifier is not acceptable to the second node, returning to the first node a negotiation request message incorporating a new path identifier for an alternative AAL2 VCC hosting a virtual channel to be used for the connection.